

AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Family Newsletter

July 31, 2024

Hello Team Amherst:

This is the first of our monthly newsletters for the 2024-2025 school year. I hope that everyone had a relaxing summer and your students are ready for the start of another school year. We have been preparing for the opening of school all summer and are looking forward to a great school year. The purpose of these newsletters is to provide our caregivers and the community with information about the school division as well as links to information that we hope you will find beneficial. I stated the greeting as "Hello Team Amherst" to reintroduce you to the "Team Amherst" approach. We are all a part of the same team with the same outcomes in mind for our students which include: to be physically and emotionally healthy; to maximize their potential; be career and life ready; and be able to contribute to the community upon graduation. I am excited about the opportunity to continue to build positive relationships between the school division, our families, and our community.

New teachers reported to work on July 29 to begin their orientation process in the school division. On August 5 all staff will report to their schools to begin preparing for their students and the new school year. We will have an Open House at all schools on August 8 from 1:00 – 7:00 PM. Amherst County High School will also host a Freshman Parent Orientation on August 8 from 5:00 – 6:00 PM. We will conduct a transition day for students in Pre-K, Kindergarten, 6th grade and 9th grade on August 13. Students entering Pre-K and Kindergarten will attend their respective schools from 9:00 – 12:00. Students entering the 6th and 9th grades will attend their respective schools from 8:00 – 11:00. Transportation will be provided. Please be on the lookout for additional information from your student's respective school. Finally, the first day of school for the 2024-2025 school year is August 14.

Our theme this year is TEAM. In 2022 we introduced the concept of Team Amherst. This year our staff will focus on working as a team with our families and community to meet the needs of our students and provide them with the tools they need to be successful. Our staff will focus on engaging and building relationships with students, families, and the community. I am asking that our families and community members commit to joining "Team Amherst" to support our students and schools.

Amherst County Public Schools will continue with our #ShowUpAmherst initiative again this year. This initiative is part of our character education program and is designed to emphasize the importance of being present for school and being an active participant in Team Amherst. Each school in the division will hold events throughout the year that are designed to encourage students to show up to school and be a part of the team. Data from the previous two school years indicates that Show Up Amherst had a positive influence on student attendance. The Show Up Amherst team will host the Show Up Amherst Community Tailgate at Amherst County High School at the October 4 football game from 5:00 – 7:00 PM. The menu will include hamburgers, hotdogs, sides and drinks. This is a free event and we encourage our students, staff, families, and community to attend.

Amherst County Public Schools will also continue to focus on student attendance. We realize that instructional time lost during the pandemic has had a negative effect on our students. We need our students in school on a daily basis. Research suggests that students learn best when they receive quality in-person instruction. We are going to do all we can to provide a quality educational experience. We are asking you to do everything within your power to have your children attend school daily.

This year Amherst County Public Schools will be implementing a new Cell Phone and Personal Electronic Device Regulation that limits student accessibility to cell phones and other devices during the school day. In general, the regulation will require high school and middle school students to place their cell phones and other devices in their school lockers while elementary students will be required to place their cell phone and devices in their book bags/back packs. I have sent information through School Messenger and posted a video to our social media pages regarding the regulation. Additionally, all school principals will be sharing information with our families regarding the regulation before the opening of school. We have included information about the regulation in this newsletter for you to review.

I ask that you continue to work us to help us build the "team." The school division is asking that our families and community work alongside and join "Team Amherst" as we work to provide our students with the educational opportunities they need to be successful upon graduation. We have volunteer opportunities at all of our schools and we encourage our families and community to join us. If we all work together as one team with a common goal, there is nothing that can stand in our way. This is the start of another exciting year for Amherst County Public Schools and I thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

William



UPCOMING DATES

AUGUST 8 - OPEN HOUSE (1:00-7:00 PM)

AUGUST 13 - TRANSITION DAY

AUGUST 14 - FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

2024-2025 School Calendar

WHAT'S
NEW?

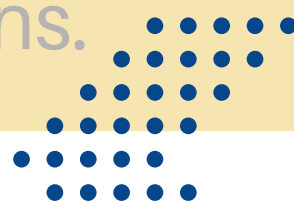


Don't forget to
follow Amherst
County Public
Schools on
Social Media!



SCHOOL SUPPLY LISTS

2024-2025 School Supply Lists
are now available. Please
contact your student's school if
you have any questions.



School Registration

It's time to gear up for a new school year ahead! Registration forms are now available online! If you don't have your PowerSchool login, please contact your child's school for assistance.



New Student Registration

If you are enrolling a new student into Amherst County Public School, click the icon above to be forwarded to the online enrollment system for student brand new to Amherst County Public Schools. If you are a returning student please use the Parent Portal to access the returning student registration forms. If you need assistance in having your password reset or creating a new account,



Back to School Registration Forms

Amherst County Public Schools has made available the enrollment forms for the upcoming school year. Parents/Guardians have the opportunity to complete the forms online instead of completing them manually through the ECollect Forms service. The process is very simple and should be a time saver for everyone involved.



We are currently accepting Smart Start Preschool applications for the 2024-2025 school year.

To apply for the 2024-2025 school year, please click the preschool image link above.

[Click here to register your student!](#)

Student Transportation

Our dedicated transportation team is responsible for providing safe and efficient transportation for all eligible students to and from schools each day. Please be patient during the first weeks of school as our transportation staff work diligently on the bus routes and students and families adjust to the schedule. Once bus routes have been finalized, information can be found on our website, click the link below.

[Bus Route Information](#)

If you have any questions, please contact the Transportation Department at 434-946-9707



ACPS Regulation JFC-R2

Cell Phones and Other Personal Electronic Devices

Effective July 1, 2024

Why?

Amherst County Public Schools as well as numerous school divisions across the Commonwealth and the Nation are having to deal with the inappropriate use of electronic devices on a daily basis. The use of electronic devices has been shown to be a major distractor to students and keeps them from focusing on instruction and reaching their full potential.

Recent research by the Centers for Disease Control indicates the average screen time for Americans aged 8-18 is 7.5 hours per day just for their recreational use. This does not take into account screen time for school assignments.

Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order 33:
Establishing Cell Phone-Free Education to Promote the Health and Safety of Virginia's k-12 Students



Student Expectations

The use of cell phones (and all other personal electronic devices including, but not limited to, headphones, earbuds, smart watches, and other Bluetooth enabled devices) is prohibited during the regular school day. Upon students' arrival at school, and continuing through dismissal from school, cell phones and other personal electronic devices are required to be out of visible sight and powered off.

Elementary School

Elementary students will be required to place the cell phones and other devices in their book bag/pack.

Middle & High School

Secondary students will be required to secure their cell phones and other devices in their locker. All students will be issued a locker.

Cell Phones and other Personal Electronic Devices may be used:

1. when students are attending non-instructional after school events/activities;
 2. when students have a documented medical exception approved by the principal and school nurse;
 3. when students are riding the school bus, as long as such use is not disruptive or distracting;
- Students must use earbuds or headphones when listening to music or watching videos with sound while on the school bus.

Staff Expectations

Teachers and other school personnel are expected to model expectations and are prohibited from using cell phones and other personal electronic devices during scheduled class time or other times when personnel are responsible for the instruction and/or direct supervision of students.

[Click here to read the full regulation](#)

Meet Drax!



We are pleased to announce that the Amherst County Sheriff's Office has assigned canine Drax to the SRO staff in Amherst County Public Schools. SRO SGT Mitchell Harrison is Drax's handler, and they will be primarily assigned to Amherst County High School. Drax is a two year old yellow lab and is certified to identify multiple scents to include Narcotics, Vapes, Tobacco, and Gun Powder. While Drax will be based at the high school, he and SGT Harrison may make appearances at all schools in the division.

The funding for Drax was made available through state and private grants as well as funds from the opioid abatement program. We are excited to continue our partnership with the Amherst County Sheriff's Office to enhance the safety and security of our facilities for students and staff.



BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS



It is normal to feel nervous about going back to school. Listen to your child and reassure them that many students take a bit of time to get adjusted to the routine of the school year.

Homework:

Provide your child with a structure so that expectations are clear. Allow for a quiet, organized space to complete work where your child can ask you for help when needed. Snacks can often help replenish energy to maintain focus and complete challenging work.

Bedtime:

Bedtime can be a difficult adjustment after a break from school. Start gradually getting back into an earlier bedtime and earlier wake time to prepare for school starting.

- **Morning Routine:**
- Start discussing with your
- child what the morning
- routine will look like once
- school starts. Break down
- the routine into steps
- that your child can easily
- remember. Begin
- practicing steps to be
- sure you allow enough
- time. Consider creating a
- visual schedule that your
- child can refer to, and be
- sure to encourage your
- child when you see them
- complete a specific step.

We are so excited and can't wait to see you soon!



Amherst County Public Schools Literacy Links



Building the Literacy Connection Between Home and School

2023-2024 School Year | Quarter 4

Local Community Resources

[Amherst County Public Library](#)
Summer Reading Program (SRP) kicks off June 1, 2024 and runs through August 3, 2024. SRP Kick-off on June 1 at Madison Heights Library from 10:30am-12:30pm. More information is available on their website. <https://acpl.us/Events>



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[Barnes & Noble](#)

Did you know that your child can earn a free book by reading 8 books of their choice? Visit https://dispatch.barnesandnoble.com/content/dam/ccr/bnstores/kids/misc/2024/KidsSummerReadingJournalEnglish_bn.com.pdf to print a Summer Reading Journal. Once your child records their 8 books, they can take their completed journal to a B&N location and select a free book from the list. Happy Reading!



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[Givens Books Little Dickens](#)

The 7th Annual Summer Reading Program will kick off this summer with reading activities and rewards. Visit the store to pick up your Summer Passport or their Facebook page for more information. <https://www.facebook.com/GivensBooksLittleDickens/>



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Additional Parent Resources

Looking for additional resources to support literacy at home this summer with your child? Visit [VDOE's Literacy Resources for Parents and Communities webpage](#). Here you will find numerous resources by grade level and strand to support your child.



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Summer Learning With Lexia Core5 and Lexia PowerUp

Did you know that your kindergarten through Grade 8 child has access to their Lexia program over the summer to continue to work on reading skills? Here's how Lexia's Reading Programs work:

- ❑ Your child begins Core5 or PowerUp at a starting point that fits his or her needs.
- ❑ Online activities include direct instruction and immediate feedback as your child learns new skills.

Over the summer, you can support progress in the program by reading daily with your child and talking about what they have read. Lexia can be found on your student's Clever Dashboard. Upon logging in, students may choose which skill they would like to practice with. Completing two units or lessons each day can support your child over the summer.

- ❑ For ways to support your child at each level in LexiaCore5, you can visit [Lexia's Website](#) or scan the QR code.



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- ❑ For activities to support your child in LexiaPowerUp, you can visit [Lexia's Website](#) or scan the QR code.



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How Can Science-Based Reading Research Support Us?

Evidence-based Practices

- 1 Reading research from many different fields has led to a collection of evidence-based practices that makes reading instruction more efficient and effective.

What research tells us...

- We are not born wired to read.
- Students have to be taught to crack the code.
- Reading comprehension is the product of multiple subcomponent skills including decoding and oral language.

What to Teach...

- Reading researchers have learned students need mastery of skills in five key areas to become fluent readers: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

How to Teach...

- Studies have shown that using direct instruction techniques - where concepts are taught both explicitly and systematically - is the best way to help students master reading concepts.

How to Support Students

- Use a gradual release approach of "I do," "We do," "You do."
- Provide multiple opportunities to respond
- Provide scaffolding and instructive feedback

Taken from Virginia Literacy Partnerships

Virginia Literacy Act

With the passage of the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) in the 2022 General Assembly, Virginia is taking the lead nationwide to improve early literacy outcomes for Virginia's young learners.

Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year:

- Every student in kindergarten to grade five will receive core literacy instruction based in scientifically based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, as defined in the VLA. Students in kindergarten through grade eight will also receive evidence-based supplemental instruction and intervention, as outlined in an individualized student reading plan, if they do not meet literacy benchmarks.
- Every family will have access to online resources to support literacy development at home, and will be able to participate in the development of their child's student reading plan, if their child does not meet literacy benchmarks.

More information about other VLA requirements can be found on the [VDOE VLA website](#).



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Amherst County Public Schools offers school-wide Title I Programs at each of our elementary schools. For more information about our Title I Programs or for more ways to help your child at home, please visit our [ACPS Title I webpage](#) or contact your school's reading specialists. Don't forget to check out the [ACPS Parent and Family Literacy Links](#) website for more resources!



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Amherst County Public Schools

Math Moments

Meaningful Math Experiences Can Happen Anywhere!



2023-2024 School Year | Quarter 4

Summer Learning: Preventing the Summer Slide Summer learning loss, or the “summer slide,” happens when students lose some of the skills and knowledge they gained during the school year over the summer break.



Here are some facts about how the summer slide affects math skills:

- Students lose an average of 2.6 months of math skills over the summer.
- Between 70% and 78% of students experience a drop in their math skills during the summer.
- The biggest drop happens between 5th and 6th grades, with 84% of students showing a decline in math.
- By 5th grade, students who experience summer learning loss can be 2.5 to 3 years behind their peers.
- Children in lower-income families tend to lose more than their peers.

While it might seem intimidating to maintain learning over the summer, experts agree that it does not take a whole school day of effort to prevent learning loss during the summer. Parents can play a vital role in preventing math learning loss by engaging their children in these enjoyable activities:

- Count everything: Count the number of steps to the car, the number of toys in a box, the number of candies in a jar. Later, introduce estimating the same quantities. Double-check your child’s counting when appropriate. Reasonable estimates are one of the most useful strategies for successful mathematical thinking.
- Bake together: Let your child become familiar with the purpose of measuring, the various measurements (cups, tablespoons, liters) and an understanding of quantity. At later stages, let them work out amounts naturally, such as doubling or halving a recipe.
- Point out fractions: Cut food into equal pieces. Point out $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, etc. Help establish the concept that $\frac{1}{4}$ of a piece of a chocolate bar is smaller, or less, than $\frac{1}{2}$ of a piece.
- Ordering food: If your family orders take-out food, keep the take-out menus handy and have your child calculate the amounts required and the total cost. If the amounts are beyond your child’s mathematical understanding, help them use a simple calculator.
- Outdoor activities: Look for things to count, then compare and tally. For example, ask, “How many doors do you think there are on this street?” Take the time to use math in physical activity. Can your child run faster or jump farther than they did the last time? Use rulers, stopwatches and tape measures to track distance and time.
- Games: Board games, puzzles, and card games offer opportunities for mathematical engagement and critical thinking. Through games like Monopoly, Battleship, or Uno, children can develop mathematical concepts such as probability, spatial reasoning, and logical deduction in a fun and interactive way.

“Target: A Card Game To Practice Math Facts” (Grades K+ for 2+ players)
Target Number is a two player card game to reinforce basic operations. If you are playing with younger children, use addition and subtraction only. Older students can use any operation to equal the target number.

Materials Needed:

- a deck of cards with Jacks, Queens and Kings removed,
- paper and pencil!

Watch how to play!



Objective: To be the first to spell the word “TARGET” by using operations to make the target number. How to Play:

- The dealer deals three cards to each player and then then flips a card over and places it in the center. This is the target number. Aces are equal to 1.
- At the same time, all players turn over their three cards and lie them face up on the table. The goal is for each player to use the numbers on all three of their cards to equal the target number.
 - Example 1: If the target number is 10, and a player has a 4, 5, and 9, he could use the equation: “ $9+5-4$.”
 - Example 2: If the target number is 8, and a player has a 3, 3, and Ace, she could use the equation: “ $3 \times 3 - 1$.”
- If a player can make the target number, he writes a “T” on his paper.
- At the end of the round, all players then “sweep” their cards to the side, along with the target number card. The dealer then deals another hand and play continues.
- If neither player can make the target number, a fourth card is dealt to each player. Now players can use 3 of the 4 cards to make the target number.
- Cards continue to be dealt until one player can make the target number. The goal is to be the first player to spell TARGET.

Helpful Tips:

It is helpful to use two decks so that you have more cards to play with. Decks do not need to be complete.

You can also make the game easier or more difficult by changing the number of cards given to each player. For example, give each player 4-5 cards and still require them to use at least 3 to make the target number. Or require the use of all 5 of the cards to make the target number.



Online Platforms

Your child will continue to have access to their educational school apps through Clever over the summer to support math. Both platforms highlight foundational and high-priority skills from the previous year to ensure students are on track to succeed in the next grade level.



IXL



IXL Summer Boost: Math
[K](#) [1st](#) [2nd](#) [3rd](#) [4th](#) [5th](#)



Zearn

Language Lens

Supporting Language Acquisition

2023-2024 School Year | Quarter 4



Thank You!

Thank you to those of you who were able to join us for our EL Family Event at ACHS on May 17th. We had a lot of fun meeting each of you and look forward to having events like these in the future.

As we move into the summer, we want to thank you for the support you provide your students at home. We are very grateful for your partnership and are excited to see the progress made this year.

Please reach out to us with any questions or concerns you may have. Enjoy your summer!

For more information contact:

Sandra Goldman - sgoldman@amherst.k12.va.us

Lisa Schoener - lschoener@amherst.k12.va.us

Melissa Fox - mmfox@amherst.k12.va.us

At Home Learning Sites

Duolingo

Target Skills: Language Learning

Recommended Grade Levels: All ages

Improve English language skills by completing an online course.

The easiest way to use this resource is to:

1. Open [Duolingo](https://www.duolingo.com) and select the language you speak fluently on the top right corner.
2. Click on "Get Started" and create a FREE account.
3. Select the language you want to learn.
4. Click on the path you want to take: "Learning for the first time" or "Already know some".

It's recommended to select "Already know some." to be given a short quiz that Duolingo will use to tailor its lessons to meet your current skill level. This is a fun and engaging way to practice either English or your home language.



Make Belief Comix

Target Skills: Reading and Writing

Recommended Grade Levels: 1-12

Visit <https://makebeliefscomix.com/> to create your very own comic by combining a love of drawing and writing! You may practice either English or your home language as you share your story in a comic.



Colorín Colorado

Target Skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing

Recommended Grade Levels: PK-12

This site's For Families section provides ways to increase your child's literacy and vocabulary skills. You can find books to read, videos to promote conversation, and opportunities to write about engaging themes, all organized by topic.



Visit our ACPS Website to learn more about our English Learner Program



At Home Activities

Shopping Assistant Wanted

Do you have to go grocery shopping and need to take the kids with you? Use the time together to challenge them and keep them engaged by having them count out the produce, hunt for certain colors, or search for specific brands using their reading skills. You can even ask them to keep track of the grocery bill as you go shopping.



Let's get things done!

As a parent, you might feel overwhelmed by the amount of work around the house. Ask your child to help out with creating a household chore chart by daily, weekly, and monthly chores. This will give them some experience managing people and tasks and challenge them to think critically while evenly distributing jobs by time and effort for each one.





& BECOME A VOLUNTEER



Join Team Amherst and have a positive impact on the lives of students!

Opportunities

- Greet students during arrival/dismissal
- Assist front office staff
- Monitor hallways
- Lunch duty coverage



These are just a few examples of opportunities in our schools. For more information on how to become a volunteer, please contact our offices or visit our website by scanning the QR code!



Questions? Please contact any of our schools you would like volunteer at!

Or - Contact Brittany McNerney



434-946-9387



bmcnerney@amherst.k12.va.us

**AMHERST COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
PRESENTS**

AMHERST NIGHT OUT



*Meet local & state law enforcement
officers & see emergency vehicles,
boats, drones & more!*

Saturday, August 3rd

5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Amherst County High School

Food vendors, live music & fireworks!

For more information: _____

***Contact
Master Deputy Martin
swmartin@amherstsheriff.org***



Get involved in the 2024



HOW ARE YOU GOING TO
PARTICIPATE IN THE 2024
AMHERST COUNTY FAIR?
WE NEED:

- Food Vendors
- Retail Vendors
- Non-profit exhibits
- YOUTH Makers (new this year for creatives under 17)

- Volunteers
- Sponsors



Scan the QR code for
information
on how to participate!



www.amherstcountyfair.com



OCTOBER
17-20



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES



USDA
Supplemental
Nutrition
Assistance
Program



Can't afford to buy groceries? **SNAP can help!**

What is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)? SNAP provides nutrition benefits to supplement the food budget of families so they can purchase healthy food.

- » SNAP benefits are calculated based on household size, income, expenses and other nonfinancial criteria.
- » You may be eligible even if you are working.
- » SNAP does not make you a public charge and will not be considered in a public charge determination.

It's easy to apply!

Online: commonhelp.virginia.gov

Call: 833-522-5582

Visit: Your local department of social services

Am I eligible?



Scan the QR code below to go to CommonHelp.virginia.gov to check your eligibility, apply online and, if you are a current customer, manage your account - all in one place!



From the CommonHelp homepage:

1. Click "Get Started"
2. Click "Check eligibility"
3. Answer short questions to check your eligibility.

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